Decline in Foodgrain Production

*510. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that foodgrain production for 2000-01 was estimated at 199.02 million tonnes, showing a decline of 4.7 per cent, during the current Agriculture Year, in comparison to last year; and

(b) if so, what are the reasons for the decline in production during 2000-01?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI NITISH KUMAR): (a) and (b) According to the third advance estimates, foodgrains production during 2000-01 is likely to be 196.13 million tonnes as against the final estimates of 208.87 million tonnes for 1999-2000. Thus, the foodgrains production is expected to decline by 6.1% during the current agriculture year. This being advance estimates for 2000-01, it is subject to revision after agriculture year is over. The decline in foodgrains production during 2000-01 is expected mainly due to aberrant weather conditions in certain States like Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan etc. Such annual fluctuation in agriculture is not an unusual phenomenon. However, the foodgrains production in India shows a long term upward trend.

Formation of the Rail-Tel Corporation

*511. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Railways, proposed ambitious optic fibre cable network business plan, including formation of a Rail-Tel Corporation and commercial exploitation of right of way by leasing optic fibre cables along entire length of 62,800 kilometers of rail track, has been placed before a Group of Ministers for review and taking decision; and

(b) if so, the salient features of the plan, Rail-tel Corporation equity participation etc. and by when the proposal would be given clearance?